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THE OUTCOME OF THE CABOT QUATER- CENTENARY

It cannot be said that the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the American continent by John Cabot was celebrated with as much enthusiasm as that of the West Indies by Columbus. A good test is the number of historical and literary productions published on those two occasions. For the achievement of the great Genoese, we know of six hundred and fifty books and pamphlets printed in 1891 and 1892, in nearly all the languages of Europe, in prose and verse. Concerning Cabot's discovery, we have heard of only two or three volumes, a dozen review and newspaper articles, three memoirs, an address, four speeches, two medleys of barefaced plagiarism, the one fabricated in Bristol, the other, quite recently, in London, and no poem at all. The indifference of the public, at home and abroad, was further shown by the utter failure of the subscription which Americans residing in England started for the purpose of arranging a plan whereby adequate notice might be taken of the event in Bristol. Yet John Cabot is certainly more to the people of England and of the United States than Christopher Columbus is in many respects, although he cannot be justly credited with greater forecast in the accomplishment of his famous deed.

Scanty as those publications may be, they nevertheless afford a certain interest. Three or four of them are curious on different accounts. One shows original investigations, and although based upon positive errors, with conclusions quite as erroneous, it does credit to its author. Another exhibits honest recantations, indicating that conscientious historians now generally adopt notions concerning the Cabots, particularly Sebastian, which a few years ago were almost hooted at. A third and fourth afford fair samples of the historical erudition of distinguished orators, lay and clerical. We only propose to examine the questions alleged to have been solved in all these Cabotian effusions, and especially the intrinsic worth of the statements brought forward to bolster delusions regarding the memorable transatlantic voyage of 1497.

I.

We first notice a paper of Dr. Samuel Edward Dawson inserted in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*.¹ It is called in that country "an admirable monograph, incomparably the best thing ever written on the subject, and to the author of which we must all doff our caps." That paper is also represented, in certain academic quarters, "to have settled the long-disputed question of Cabot's landfall."²

The problem has been mooted by Dr. Dawson, we confess, with skill and an adequate knowledge of the subject. To us, personally, it is a positive relief to see at last a critic who answers facts, arguments and documents, not with shallow and puerile reasons, betraying an incredible ignorance of the matter, as is so often the case, but by resorting to objections which deserve to be seriously discussed, however erroneous they may prove to be in important particulars.

Dr. Dawson is convinced that the landfall of John Cabot in 1497 is the easternmost point of Cape Breton ; and he has endeavored to prove it by a theory of his own concerning the magnetic variations, at first as follows :

"If Columbus *on a direct western course dropped two hundred and forty miles from Gomera* his point of departure to his landfall in the Antilles in 1492 with a variation of one point west, it is altogether probable that John Cabot with a variation of a point and a half would have dropped, in 1497, three hundred and sixty miles to the south on his *western course across the Atlantic* ; and, again, if John Cabot laid his course to the west by compass from latitude 53° north the variation, so much greater than that observed by Columbus, would have carried him clear of Cape Race and to the next probable landfall, Cape Breton."³

If language means anything, it is plain that, according to the above extract, Dr. Dawson's premises were Columbus's course from Gomera and Cabot's course from latitude 53° north. It likewise sets forth as the basis for measuring the length of the line of divergence the length of the course from Gomera to Guanahani. For what can be clearer than the phrase which we underscore ? Nor is the wording corrected or contradicted anywhere in Dr. Dawson's memoir.

At the outset it must be said that even admitting, for the sake of argument, Dr. Dawson's hypothesis that John Cabot experienced a magnetic variation of a point and a half, he nevertheless would

¹ Vol. XII., Sec. II., 1894, and Vol. II., Sec. II., 1896.

² Dr. Harvey's remarks in *op. cit.*, 1896, Vol. II., Sec. II., p. 3.

³ *Op. cit.*, 1894, p. 58.

not have dropped three hundred and sixty miles, as Dr. Dawson has said and believed. It has been demonstrated ¹ by $a + b$ that Cabot would have dropped one hundred and eighty-three miles only. And, consequently, (always as a logical inference from Dr. Dawson's theory, such as we find it explicitly stated in the said memoir), instead of making his landfall at Cape Breton, as our learned opponent asserts or asserted, Cabot would have made it just *one hundred and seventy-seven miles more to the northward*; that is to say, in Newfoundland, on the eastern shore of Cape Bauld.

So much for "incomparably the best thing ever written on the subject," and "the settlement of the long-disputed question of Cabot's landfall at Cape Breton," as Canadian savants declare.

That was four years ago. Dr. Dawson now holds and claims to have meant that in measuring the length of the line of divergence south of a due western course, "we must commence in the case of Cabot near the coast of Ireland, and in the case of Columbus at a considerable distance west of Gomera."² That is a new proposition altogether, and absolutely adverse to the very precise expressions employed by him in 1894. Under the circumstances, it is surprising that Dr. Dawson, as the expert writer that he is, should have written so clearly "If Columbus on a direct western course dropped 240 miles *from Gomera*," instead of writing as he does at this late hour, and again erroneously as we propose to show: "Columbus dropped 240 miles from the place where the westing of his compass reached one point," or "in 40° longitude," or "at a considerable distance west of Gomera."

Be that as it may, Dr. Dawson's new position is just as untenable as the first. It again rests upon an aggregation of bare hypotheses.³ He gratuitously assumes that the laws of secular motion of the curves of equal variation on the surface of the globe are sufficiently known to enable him to infer from the variations which Columbus experienced in 25° north latitude, the variations which Cabot experienced in 53° north latitude. He also takes for granted

¹ For a mathematical demonstration of the fallacy, see the *Nachrichten von der königl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Philolog.-histor. Klasse, 1897, Heft 3, pp. 345-348.

² *The Voyages of the Cabots*. Roy. Soc. Can., Vol. III., Sec. II., 1897, p. 161.

³ "In a brief interview I had with Mr. Fox, I took occasion to express my conviction of the impossibility of arriving at any very definite conclusion, partly on account of the extremely scanty material as to facts and partly in consequence of the want of assistance derivable from purely theoretical grounds; the cause of the phenomenon of the secular change of the magnetic declination being quite unknown and the time comparatively short during which to trace the law of change as hitherto observed." Charles A. Schott, *An Inquiry into the Variation of the Compass*, Coast Survey Reports for 1880.

(theoretically) that the variations experienced by Cabot cannot possibly have been inferior or superior to one point and a half west, or eastwardly, or *nil*; which assumption, whether expressed or implied, is entirely unwarranted.

The learned Canadian likewise argues as if we were as well posted regarding the particulars of Cabot's voyage as we are concerning that of Columbus. He forgets that we know nothing whatever about Cabot's course, beyond the naked fact that he sailed west from some undetermined point on the western coast of Ireland and "wandered a good deal :—*havendo assai errato*." How can a reflective and investigating mind build upon such vague data, were it partly only, the asseveration that Cabot's course was west magnetic, and that the corresponding true course was this magnetic course west, corrected by one point and a half of variation?

As a sort of apology, Dr. Dawson at present informs his readers that the "increment of variation was not intended to be, and could not be, an argument in the least degree amenable to mathematical treatment." Why then did he take it as the basis of his postulate, when stating that John Cabot "with a variation of one point and a half would have dropped 360 miles to the south," or that if the bold navigator "laid his course to the west by compass from latitude 53° N., a variation of one point and a half would have carried him clear of Cape Race?" Was not this alleged consequence predicated upon mathematical treatment?

Driven away from this position, Dr. Dawson appeals to "the uniformity of the laws of nature, by which we are led to assume that in whatever way the magnetic pole and curves of variation are shifting now they were shifting then, in that slow change which is still going on from year to year."

Dr. Dawson confuses two very distinct things, viz.: the uniformity of the laws of nature, by virtue of which occur around us the movements which we observe, and the uniformity of these movements. Because a movement is produced by the uniform laws of nature, it does not follow that this movement must necessarily be uniform. In nature, on the contrary, movements are exceedingly varied; as is shown constantly in astronomy, natural philosophy, and all the sciences in which movements are studied.

It is therefore inexact and unscientific, from beginning to end, to maintain that the magnetic variation at Cape Race in 1497 can be determined from the fact that "it is at present 30° west, and that the variation now at the Admiral's point of observation in 1492, is 20° west." The relative positions of the curves of equal variation between the coast of Ireland and Newfoundland at the time of

Cabot are totally unknown,¹ and cannot be therefore deduced from their actual position. We have only to examine on an Admiralty chart the present distribution of those curves, to see at a glance that if mentally or otherwise we move the network or entire series of them (supposing, for the experiment, that they are rigid or material) the magnetic curves which pass over any portion of the globe *will no longer bear to each other the relations which they had before we displaced the entire set of said curves*, in the manner aforesaid. Dr. Dawson therefore has not proved and cannot prove by what he calls the uniformity of the laws of nature that "Cabot in a northern parallel would, of necessity, cross the magnetic meridians in quicker succession," and still less that the total result of variation experienced by Cabot between Ireland and Newfoundland was "a point and a half."

We must now revert to Dr. Dawson's new specific theory. He says that "from the sum total of 3150 miles [given by his opponent as the length of Columbus's course from Gomera to Guanahani] must be deducted at least 672 miles, leaving a distance of 2478 miles,² because [as Dr. Dawson again alleges] it was not until he reached the longitude of 40° that the Admiral noticed a variation of a full point." He completes his postulate with the further assertion that "the length of the course should be counted, for the purpose of this argument, from the point where the disturbing influence first began to act."

But where did it first begin to act? That is the question. All we know on the subject is comprised within these few words of Columbus in his log-book: "Jueves, 13 de Setiembre. En este día, al comienzo de la noche, las agujas noruesteaban, y á la mañana noruesteaban algun tanto." The Admiral does not state, and we have no means whatever of knowing, in what meridian the westing of his compasses was thus noticed.

¹ Dr. Dawson in support of his theory refers to Reinel's chart of 1505 (monograph of 1898, p. 161) which, he says, "shows plainly upon it, by its double scale, a variation on the Newfoundland coast of nearly two points." That will be news to the student of cartography. It is true that in one of the scales Cape Race has the latitude of 50½° N., and in the other it has the latitude of 47° N., which is nearer the truth. But neither the one nor the other has anything to do with the magnetic variation. The oblique scale is merely a graphic correction of an original error in the perpendicular one. Kohl (*Doc. Hist. of Maine*, p. 178) and Peschel (*Zeitalt. der Entdeck.*, 1858, p. 332, note 2), both of them high authorities, who describe the scale on the chart, would not have failed to notice the fact if they had ever dreamt that magnetism was at all involved in the matter. Supposing even that one or the other of these scales was intended to show a variation (which hypothesis is scarcely admissible) and that the variation was exact, it would apply only to the east coast of Newfoundland, and not to the marine space between Ireland and Newfoundland; the totality of which has to be taken into account in a computation of that sort.

² By Columbus's course, as worked out by Capt. Fox, the distance was 3105 miles; but this difference of 45 miles is insignificant.

According to the recent map produced by Dr. Dawson himself, the agonic line was met by Columbus in the meridian of about 30° . The fact that he noticed the westing of his compasses on the 13th of September¹ does not prove that his course until then had been constantly due west from Gomera to the meridian of 40° longitude, adopted by Dr. Dawson, and especially between 30° and 40° . This he is bound to show before assuming to deduct 672 miles from the course. Further, what we know of the matter has no other basis than Capt. Schott's above-mentioned conjectural chart, and, curious to say, it even contradicts Dr. Dawson's theory in a most important particular.

We see, for instance, from this hypothetical tracing of the line of no variation that the westing of Columbus's compasses commenced near 30° west, and went on increasing until 40° , when the Admiral noticed that the variation had reached one full point west. From 40° W., in a western course, it could but continue to increase and was more than one point until the landfall was made at Guanahani. It follows that if, according to Dr. Dawson's new theory, "the length of the course should be counted from the point where the disturbing influence first began to act," we must count, not from 40° , as Dr. Dawson now maintains, but from a meridian situated nine or ten degrees more to the eastwards, viz.: *in the longitude of 30°* (in round figures).

Even with the minimum length (2433 miles) assumed by him for the portion of the course which alone, he now says, experienced the variation west, we find for a linear deviation of 240 miles, an angular deviation of $5^{\circ} 38'$.² It follows that if with a variation of one point west ($11^{\circ} 15'$) Columbus's angular deviation was $5^{\circ} 38'$, Cabot's angular deviation, with Dr. Dawson's alleged variation of one point and a half ($16^{\circ} 52' 30''$), will be one-and-a-half times $5^{\circ} 38'$, or $8^{\circ} 27'$.

And now, what is the practical outcome of all these technical demonstrations?

¹ It is well to recollect that we do not possess the original complete text of Columbus's log-book. We only have an abridgment made by Bishop Las Casas, and even this was made from a mere copy, now lost.

² We know that Dr. Dawson does not like logarithms and mathematical proofs, but they cannot well be avoided at this present juncture.

Calling x the angle of deviation of the course of Columbus from the true direction east and west, this angle x is given by the relation $\tan x = \frac{240}{2433}$.

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Log } 240 & = & 2.380211 \\ \text{Colog } 2433 & = & 4.613858 \\ \hline \text{Log } \tan x & = & 2.994069 \\ & & x = 5^{\circ} 38' \end{array}$$

This angular deviation of $8^{\circ} 27'$ corresponds with a linear deviation of 233 miles south of the parallel of 53° latitude north, in which Cabot's magnetic course is supposed to have lain. Theoretically, this magnetic course amounted exactly to 1621 miles, Dr. Dawson to the contrary notwithstanding.¹ He says 1740 miles. But 1740 miles is the distance from the Irish coast in 53° latitude north to Cape Race, and the learned Canadian is simply begging the question when he sets forth *a priori* this distance of 1740 miles before having first proved that Cabot actually passed close to Cape Race; which is the gist of the problem.

Admitting therefore (still for the sake of argument) a variation of one point and a half ($16^{\circ} 52' 30''$) west for Cabot, we find that the angular deviation in his course was only $8^{\circ} 27'$, which, as above stated, corresponds with a linear deviation of 238 miles,² instead of 360 miles alleged by our painstaking opponent. These 238 miles of linear deviation would fix Cabot's landfall at $360 - 238 = 122$ miles more to the northwards than the landfall which Dr. Dawson strenuously advocates; as he can readily ascertain by borrowing "the chart, the ruler and the protractor" of a highly impartial and considerate Toronto critic, but making a more judicious use of the same.

In other words, the landfall of Cabot, which, according to Dr. Dawson's interpretation of 1896, was at Cape Breton, would have been (under his first theory) far up in Newfoundland, at White Bay. The landfall which, according to his interpretation of 1898, was also at Cape Breton, would have been (under his latest theory) in a very different place, viz.: in the Bay of Bonavista.

Withal, we do not wish to be understood to say that the landfall was at Bonavista rather than at Cape Breton, or anywhere else. Our sole object has been to prove that on this point Dr. Dawson erred as much in 1898 as he did in 1894 and 1896. As to our private opinion, it is that we do not know and apparently never shall know where John Cabot first sighted the New World.

II.

So recently as 1893, Sir Clements Markham, the distinguished

¹ The magnetic course is the only one that should be taken into account in the computation of the linear deviation in Cabot's real course, as being *the only length known*, in concurrence with the tangent of the angle of deviation; and no mathematician will gain-say this.

² Calling x Cabot's linear deviation, the deviation is given by the relation

$$\begin{aligned} x &= 1600 \times \tan 8^{\circ} 27'. \\ \log \tan 8^{\circ} 27' &= 1.71899 \\ \log 1600 &= 3.204120 \\ \log x &= 2.376019 \\ x &= 237 \text{ miles } 7. \end{aligned}$$

President of the Royal Geographical Society, maintained as regards Cabot's landfall the following opinion :¹

"The great value of the 1544 map of Sebastian Cabot is that it fixes the landfall of his father's first voyage ; that *on this point he is the highest authority, and that his evidence is quite conclusive*, if it was given in good faith " (p. xxxiii.).

Sir Clements reached the climax as follows :

"As Sebastian Cabot had no motive for falsifying his map he did not do so, and the 'Prima Vista' [*i. e.*, Cape Breton] where he placed it, *is the true landfall of John Cabot on his first voyage*" (p. xxxiv.).

In reply, among other cogent reasons, it was urged that Sebastian did have motives for falsifying his map ; that is, in placing in 1544 the landfall at Cape Breton, after having constantly, for thirty years previous, caused it to be inscribed in Labrador. These motives were that the explorations of Jacques Cartier had brought to notice a valuable region which France, then at war with England, was attempting to colonize ; that Sebastian Cabot, to advance his own interest, was always engaged in plotting and corresponding in secret with foreign rulers ; that so early as 1538, he was intriguing with the English ambassador in Spain to be employed by Henry VIII. ; that his cartographical statements, as embodied in the 1544 map, may well have been a suggestion of British claims and a bid for the King of England's favor, considering that to place the landfall near the gulf of St. Lawrence was tantamount to declaring Cape Breton and Newfoundland (instead of bleak and worthless Labrador) to be English territory ; and that in fact, a couple of years afterwards, he removed to England, where His Majesty pensioned and employed him. These reasons, which we innocently believed to be worth listening to, were unceremoniously dismissed by Sir Clements Markham as being "quite inadequate," and without his taking the trouble, as, under the circumstances, he should have done, to explain the cartographical change brought about by Sebastian Cabot. In consequence, the positive belief of Sir Clements that Cape Breton Island was Cabot's landfall remained, for the time being, unshaken.

The eminent geographer also maintained the following assertion :

"Cabot after a voyage of fifty days reached land at five o'clock in the morning of *Saturday, the 24th of June*, being St. John's Day" (p. xv.).

¹ *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, Hakluyt Society Public. No. LXXXVI., 1893.

As regards the participation of Sebastian Cabot in that memorable expedition, which had been the object of grave doubts, Sir Clements expressed this opinion :

"On the whole it seems *most probable* that John Cabot did take his young son [*i. e.*, Sebastian] with him" (p. xxiv.).

We are now made to witness a sudden revolution of opinions on these important points of maritime history.

In a paper read at the Royal Geographical Society, April 12, 1897,¹ Sir Clements Markham frankly acknowledges that "some of his views [on the subject of the Cabots] have been modified."

This time (employing the same argument which had been advanced five years ago to batter down his advocacy of the landfall at Cape Breton, viz. : the brief account which John Cabot himself gave to Raimondo di Soncino of his voyage), Sir Clements Markham throws overboard both the Cabotian planisphere and the *Prima Vista* at that very Cape Breton. It should also be noticed that with Dr. Dawson's chief argument for proving that Cape Breton was the real landfall, Sir Clements reaches an entirely different conclusion :

"The same amount of southing," says he, "caused by the variation of the compass which took Columbus to Guanahani would have taken Cabot to Bonavista bay, and taking Soncino's account of the voyage by itself, *there can be no question that Bonavista bay, on the east coast of Newfoundland, was the landfall*" (p. 608).

Unfortunately, Sir Clements neglects to initiate us into the arcanæ of his computations. It would have proved interesting to subject them to the same *experimentum crucis* as Dr. Dawson's. Meanwhile the change of front from Cape Breton to Bonavista is already a point gained. Further on it will be shown what we are to think of this new landfall.

As to the date, Sir Clements is no longer so positive : "*It was not necessarily on June 24th,*" he now says (p. 610). With regard to his previous opinion that "*most probably*" Sebastian Cabot joined the expedition of 1497, Sir Clements at present rejects it altogether. "*Sebastian,*" says he, "*was not himself on board the Matthew ;*" adding even : "*and it is very doubtful whether he accompanied his father on either of his voyages*" (p. 612).

These departures from opinions formerly held and energetically defended by the eminent geographer deserve to be noted, particularly in connection with a recantation of the same kind which stands to the credit of Dr. Dawson. For instance, this savant has found fault with one of Cabot's biographers who, he says (most erroneously however) after fixing the landfall at Cape Breton, wrote ten years

¹ *The Geographical Journal*, London, June, 1897.

afterwards in favor of the coast of Labrador. Yet, himself, after believing the landfall to have been in Newfoundland,¹ he now places it at Cape Breton.

So far from blaming such changes of view, in this or any other historical investigation, on the part of Dr. Dawson, or on the part of Sir Clements Markham, we consider that they bespeak the true spirit of experienced and loyal historians. He is indeed a very poor student of history who imagines that the book he writes embodies the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for all times to come. Even if every source of information had been exhausted, there would still remain the parallel evolution of kindred sciences and the faculty to appreciate, which, it is almost a truism to say, becomes keener and keener through constant exercise and a more thorough knowledge of the facts. "L' Histoire est une enquête perpétuelle." Only the wiseacres whose method and profound learning consist exclusively in collecting, as with a spoon, so to speak, the footnotes and statements of others, think otherwise.

III.

Dr. Dawson, after publishing his interesting monograph of 1894, wrote another,² not less elaborate, which may be called an attempt at elucidating the first, and wherein new Cabotian theories are advanced. One of these concerns the fact that after causing during thirty years the landfall to be marked in Labrador or Greenland, Sebastian Cabot removed it to Cape Breton. The question involves, besides, a point of capital interest concerning the cartographical history of America. Dr. Dawson disposes of it as follows :

"Sebastian Cabot was not in truth English born, and had no patriotic obligation to guard English interests. Therefore, when he was made grand pilot of Spain, and head of the department of cartography at Seville, he quietly acquiesced in the suppression on the maps he supervised of all traces of his father's voyage and his father's discoveries for England. . . . Cabot was well recompensed by the King of Spain for the use of that knowledge of the Bacca-laos, which he above others possessed ; and that knowledge, underrated and even despised in England, was suppressed upon the Spanish and Portuguese maps. That is the answer to the question : Why, if Cabot's landfall had been really at Cape Breton in Bacca-

¹ "For many years, under the influence of current traditions and cursory reading, I believed the landfall of John Cabot to have been in Newfoundland." Dr. Dawson in *Trans. Royal Soc. Can.* for 1894, p. 55.

² *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada relative to a Cabot celebration in 1896*, Vol. II., Sec. II. ; and *The Voyages of the Cabots ; Latest Phases of the Controversy*, N. S., Vol. III., Sec. II., 1897.

laos, did he not record it upon the maps he supervised while grand pilot of Spain?" (monograph of 1894, p. 84).

This alleged suppression of maps is a pure invention. The English discoveries were so little suppressed in the Spanish maps, that all we know about them cartographically is to be found exclusively in Spanish maps of the time and in contemporaneous copies of them. First, before Cabot came to Spain, in La Cosa's planisphere (1500), which delineates the "*Mar descubierta por inglese.*" Then, while Sebastian Cabot held the office of pilot major of Spain, in the mappemonde sent from Seville by Robert Thorne (1527), where we read: "*Terra hec ab Anglis primum fuit inventa.*" Afterwards, in the Weimar Ribeiro (1529), bearing the inscription: "*Esta tierra descubrieron los Ingleses,*" and in the Propaganda map (1529), which inserts the legend: "*laqual descubrieron los Ingleses de la villa de Bristol,*" a statement also inscribed in the Wolfenbüttel mappemonde (*circa* 1530), all of which are maps openly made in Seville, most of them while Charles V. sat upon the throne and by his own chart-makers.

If Dr. Dawson's theory is sound, let him say why the Spanish royal cartographers should have inscribed the English discoveries in official charts at all? On the other hand, at that time, or at any time, what difference could it make to Spain to place the English discoveries in Greenland or in Labrador rather than at Cape Breton, if the latter was the true place? Neither the one nor the other belonged to her. Ever since 1494 those three countries had been relinquished by Spain in favor of Portugal, officially and forever. We still possess two original maps¹ based upon the Royal Pattern (*Padron real*) and endorsed by cosmographers of Charles V. The one, dated 1527, states that it contains all that which was discovered up to date: "*todo lo que del Mundo se a descubierto fasta aora.*" The other, dated 1529, adds to this statement the following words: "according to the treaty which was entered into by the Catholic Sovereigns of Spain and King John of Portugal at Tordesillas in 1494: "*conforme a la capitulacion que hizieron los Catholicos Reyes de España y el Rey don Juan de Portugal en Tordesillas año de 1494,*" and both are signed by a "*Cosmographo de Su Magestad.*"

These authentic maps trace the line of demarcation between Spain and Portugal, marking with a Spanish flag the region within which westwardly the one could accomplish maritime discoveries, and with a Portuguese standard the region allotted eastwardly to the other for the same purpose.² Now, that line in those, and

¹ Kohl, *Die beiden ältesten General-Karten von Amerika*, Weimar, 1860, folio.

² *Alleged Partition of the Globe*, in *The Diplomatic History of America, its first chapter, 1452-1493-1494*, London, 1897, pp. 74-77.

in fact in all the Spanish maps of the sixteenth century, is made to pass through the longitude of Halifax, ascribing therefore the greatest part of Nova Scotia, the whole of Cape Breton Island and of Newfoundland, as well as the east coast of Labrador, to Portugal exclusively.

It is plain to any unbiassed mind that under the circumstances Spain had no interest whatever in making a mystery of the geographical configuration of the Atlantic borders north of the Carolinas; particularly as the *Tierra de Ayllon*, in about 35° latitude, was the extreme limit of what she claimed as her own, or attempted to colonize in that region.

Nor were the discoveries accomplished by the English a secret for any one. If the country discovered by them was Cape Breton, how is it that all the old maps and mappemondes name that region, not *Tierra de los Ingleses*, but *Tierra de los Bretones*, and even, in unmistakable language, *Terra que foy descubierta por bertomes*? Why should the Portuguese, the Catalans, the Italians, etc., who certainly had no reasons whatever for preferring the Bretons to the English, ascribe to Brittany a merit alleged to belong to England?

This legend is so deeply rooted that we must be permitted to expatiate upon its improbability. It is difficult to conceive anything more inconsistent with the records of Spanish maritime history than the assertion that Spain ever possessed geographical data concerning North America, of which other nations knew nothing, and which it was a crime to disclose in maps. In those days, the Castilian kings (to whom alone the Indies belonged, Aragon having no share in them) made known all their public orders not verbally, but by written ordinances (*cédulas*) duly promulgated. And it must be said that no monarchs in Europe indulged in the practice more than they did. We still possess all the prohibitions of a public character and decrees enacted by them. If there had even existed under their reign a law making it unlawful to communicate maps of the newly-discovered regions, we should certainly find it in one at least of the numerous *Recopilaciones de Leyes*, particularly among their elaborate and minute clauses relative to nautical matters.¹ Now there is not a single one containing the least trace of anything of the kind.² Nor did any searcher ever find in the records of the Casa de Contratacion a single case of pilots or seamen, or mer-

¹ Besides the *Recopilaciones*, see Veytia Linage, *Norte de la Contratacion*, Seville, 1672, folio.

² Dr. Dawson says: "In 1511 an edict was issued forbidding the communication of charts to foreigners" (monograph of 1894, p. 68). This edict exists only in the learned Canadian's imagination.

chants, or underwriters, or cartographers having been molested on that account.¹

On the contrary, a number of examples could be cited to prove how great was the immunity regarding the communication of maps, even to foreigners. For instance, the greatest events in the naval history of Spain are the discoveries of Columbus and Magellan. Isabella and Charles V. well knew that Venice beheld those new seaways as bespeaking the downfall of her commercial influence in the far East. Still, when Angelo Trivigiano asked of Columbus, for the use of the celebrated Venetian Admiral Domenico Malipiero, a map of the newly-discovered regions, the great Genoese at once sent his own copy to Palos, to have a perfect and complete reproduction made by a pilot of the place: "*fata et copiosa, et particular di quanto paese é stato scoperto.*"² As to the all-important strait discovered by Magellan, it was openly disclosed and delineated, with the exact route, in maps and globes supplied by Maximilianus Transylvanus, the secretary of Charles V.³ Yet, *a priori*, what required more to be kept secret than the way to the Spice Islands?

Furthermore, the advocates of the theory that geographical data were withheld by Spain, should first show in what respects any of the numerous Spanish maps of the time which we possess, and which set forth North American configurations, omit anything of importance that was then known. Peter Martyr, Las Casas, Oviedo, the mass of letters patent and judicial inquests concerning the transatlantic discoveries, etc., etc., state in detail the objects and results of Spanish voyages to the Indies, as America was then called. Not a single topographical datum worth recording can be pointed out as having been omitted in any of the semi-official Sevillian maps which have reached us. Nor is there one which does not contain all that the Casa de Contratacion, with its means of information, could then know. This fact will not be gainsaid by any one at all familiar with the Spanish archives and cartography. And as regards the northeast coast, if those charts servilely set forth the delineations, and even the very nomenclature of the Portuguese portulans, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is

¹ As to the argument of Dr. Dawson upon a passage from a letter sent from Seville in 1527 by Robert Thorne with a map to Dr. Lee, see the *Discovery of North America by John Cabot*, 3d edit., pp. 20, 21.

² Letter "Ex Granata die 21 Aug. 1501," in *Christophe Colomb*, Vol. II., p. 119. The original MS. of those highly interesting letters was discovered only five years ago in the library of Mr. Sneyd at Newcastle.

³ *De Moluccis insulis, Coloniae, 1523*, and Epistle addressed by Schöner to Reymer von Streypberg, in Wieser's *Magalhães-Strasse*, Innsbruck, 1881.

because Spain possessed no other source of information, and, consequently, she had nothing whatever to conceal in that respect.¹

In keeping with all those legends, is the following statement of Dr. Dawson: "One fact stares us in the face at the outset, that while maps were freely engraved and printed in all parts of Italy, Germany and France, none were printed in Spain" (monograph of 1898, p. 187).

To interpret this fact as showing "how effectually the Council of the Indies had concealed the cartographical records of their office," Dr. Dawson should commence by proving that the absence of American maps of Spanish make was an exception and that the Spaniards engraved and printed maps of Spain or of other countries at that time. This has not yet been shown by anybody. The plain reason is that no maps of America, and in fact no maps at all, were engraved or printed in Spain before the second half of the sixteenth century;² simply because at that time the art of engraving maps, particularly on copper, did not yet exist in that country, as was also the case in England and Portugal.

IV.

Now comes the question of Sebastian Cabot's character as a cosmographer, a scientist, a navigator and a man, which, it must be said, is at present somewhat damaged. Dr. Dawson meets a mass of documentary proofs, absolutely authentic, with an argument which he doubtless believes to be decisive, viz.:

"Ferdinand and Charles V. were good judges of men, and they trusted Sebastian Cabot to the last" (monograph of 1898, p. 182).

Even if it were so (for the word "trusted" is not generally synonymous with "employed"), what of it? History teems with instances of famous kings and great emperors, all "good judges of men," who were, nevertheless, imposed upon by charlatans to the last. How many crowned heads and important personages, as well as lesser ones, do we not see at all times and everywhere deluded by the fallacious promise held out to them of converting the baser metals into pure gold? For Ferdinand and Charles V., for Henry VII. and the advisers of Edward VI., even for Queen Mary,³ the

¹ See Oviedo, *Historia General de las Indias*, Vol. II., p. 148. He was state chronicler of the Indies and wrote on the subject of American cartography, shortly after 1541.

² The only map of Spanish make known to have been engraved in Spain before 1545, is a rough and small wood-cut inserted in the second or third issue of the 1511 edition of Peter Martyr's *First Decade*. Even the map in Medina's *Arte de Navegar* (1545) is only a rough and badly executed wood-cut, scarcely any better than Peter Martyr's.

³ Richard Willes, speaking of Sebastian Cabot's map which the Earl of Bedford had at Chenies, says: "In his card drawn with his own hand, the mouth of the North-

philosopher's stone was the discovery of a North-West Passage to Cathay ; and it was by making those monarchs believe that he positively knew of the existence of such a passage, first in the Baccalaos region (1512), then at the south (1525), and finally towards the North Pole (1553), that Sebastian Cabot prospered both in Spain and in England, after having vainly endeavored to deceive the Republic of Venice (1523 and 1551) by the same pretence.

"This man," again says Dr. Dawson (ironically), "served some of the most capable princes who ever sat upon a throne, and it remained after 350 years for us to find him out" (monograph of 1897, p. 184).

Just as if there was a time of prescription for mistakes and delusions, or as if the real estimate of Sebastian Cabot's character, under every aspect, was not based altogether upon authentic documents ! To a blind admiration, which has no other source than stereotyped averments of suspicious origin and constantly repeated, without control and without proofs, critical historians oppose Sebastian Cabot's own writings and theories. These are amply sufficient to form a correct opinion of his professional and scientific worth. They have been recently examined—for the first time in three centuries—with care and impartiality. Let the champions and admirers *quand même* of Sebastian Cabot come forward and refute, not with legends, with empty words or with objurgations, but by dint of facts and figures, if they can, the opinion formed by painstaking critics of the wily Venetian's value as a commander and a seaman,¹ as a pretended discoverer in magnetics,² as an expert in nautical science,³ nay as a cosmographer.⁴ Let them endeavor, if it be within their reach, to trace back to him the least invention or progress in maritime devices or applications ; let them even show any act or effort on his part which ever proved beneficial to anything or to any one beside himself.

As to his private character, it is worse still.⁵ We will not

Western Strait lieth near the 318 meridian, between 61° and 64° in elevation, continuing the same breadth about ten degrees West, where it openeth Southerly more and more." *History of Travayle*, 1577, p. 232. According to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sebastian even boasted having "entered the same fret until he came to the septentrional latitude of 67½ degrees."

¹ Documents in *John Cabot, the Discoverer of North America*, pp. 227-255, 412-427 ; and Drapeyron's *Revue de Géographie*, Nov., 1897.

² Docs. in *John Cabot*, etc., pp. 290-295, 296-308.

³ Docs. in *op. cit.*, pp. 309-317, 454-456.

⁴ Docs. in *op. cit.*, pp. 281-288, and Drapeyron's *Revue*, 1897.

⁵ Every document which we now discover continues to tell against Sebastian Cabot's honesty in some way or other. As a professional cartographer, see how he acted toward the Fuggers. We read the following entry in their books, lately brought to light : "Sebastian Gabato, a cosmographer. Loss suffered on his account. He was to make a map-

again enlarge on this topic, further than by expressing our surprise at the sort of ethics now employed to whitewash Sebastian Cabot. To cite a single example.

In 1522, when Magellan's companions had returned to Spain and brought news of the discovery of the southern strait, all the technical details of which had been communicated to Sebastian Cabot by virtue of his office as pilot major, he concocted a plan, which, had it been realizable, would have set at naught the results of that great deed and proved extremely prejudicial to Spain. He called repeatedly on the Venetian ambassador, proposing to carry into effect schemes concerning the spice trade for the Signory's benefit; and finally sent an agent secretly to Venice to proffer his services. Contarini, the ambassador at Valladolid, was at once instructed to confer with Cabot. The official despatch relating the interview is extremely dramatic and exhibits in a vivid light the character of the man.

They met at night. The information that the Signory hearkened to his treacherous proposals elated him. Suddenly, he became alarmed, turned pale and, quaking with fear,¹ besought the ambassador never to divulge the matter, as otherwise "it would cost him his life." The fact is that if Charles V. had been informed of such a plot, the disloyal pilot major would soon have found his way to the gallows.

Cabot, to enhance the reward which he expected to receive from Venice, took pains to inform Contarini that Ferdinand had made him a captain with a salary of 50,000 maravedis, had subsequently given him the office of pilot major with an additional salary of 50,000 maravedis and 25,000 besides as a gratuity. Then, to show, in his own peculiar way, his gratitude to Spain, he proposed to lead a Venetian fleet to Cathay or to the Spice Islands through a passage which he pretended to have discovered: "come e il vero che io l'ho ritrovato." Is it not plain that if such a knowledge existed, its disclosure belonged, as of right, to the government which employed and paid him and should never have been imparted by the pilot major of Spain to a rival nation? Every impartial his-

pemonde for us. He never did, and notwithstanding repeated efforts we have been unable to recover the money we had paid him for it, viz.: 2250 maravedis." "1553. He left Spain to go to England, and we do not know whether he is still alive. Loss for George Stecher, 2250 mrs." Konrad Haebler, *Zeitschrift der Gesellsch. f. Erdkunde zu Berlin*, Bd. XXX., 1895.

¹ "Li detti la lettera, lui la lesse et legiendola si mosse tutto di colore. Da poij letta, stete cussi un pocheto senza dirmi altro quasi sbigotito et dubio . . . ma vi prego quanto posso che la cosa sij secreta perche a me anderebbe la vita." Dispatch of Contarini, Dec. 31, 1522, in Rawdon Brown's *Calendar*, Vol. III., p. 607, seq.

torian must acknowledge Sebastian Cabot to have shown himself, on that occasion at least, both an impostor and a traitor.

Not so, however, with a certain Italian commentator, who declares this course and repeated acts of the same kind on the part of Cabot to have been perfectly legitimate and admirable. As to Dr. Dawson, having in mind either the present instance of treachery, or one precisely like it attempted by Cabot against England when in the employ of Edward VI., he meekly observes that "it must be remembered how common it was in those days for sailors to pass from the service of one prince into that of another, and necessarily some negotiations must have preceded every such transfer" (monograph of 1897, p. 185). The less said about this explanation the better.

V.

In connection with Cabot's quatercentenary, the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava delivered a patriotic address in Bristol¹ and wrote an elaborate article for a New York magazine.² They are such as to prompt the supposition that, being absorbed by official duties, his Lordship, who is a distinguished man of letters, not having time to make the required searches himself, may have entrusted to some one else the task of preparing the material for his eloquent Cabotian disquisitions. At all events, the monograph contains a number of historical novelties and, to say the least, questionable averments. Let us cite a few :

"Cabot successfully negotiated for King Henry an agreement with the King of Denmark in reference to matters affecting the English trade in Ireland."

This statement occurs for the first time in Anspach's *History of Newfoundland*, written so recently as 1819 (p. 25), and is supported by no authority whatever. Further, there are no traces of anything of the kind in a single known document, printed or manuscript, whether in England or in Denmark or in the *Hanserecesse*, which should contain information on the subject if the statement was true.

"Sebastian Cabot was born in Bristol."

He said so to Eden, in his old age, in England ; but it is one of the many falsehoods uttered by him whenever it was to his interest. To be a grantee of letters patent under the Tudors, as well as now, it was necessary to be of full age ; that is, 21 years old. As Sebastian figures as grantee in the letters patent of March 5, 1496, conjointly with his father and brothers as second son, he was

¹ *London Times*, June 27, 1897.

² *Scribner's Magazine*, July, 1897, pp. 72-75.

then not less than twenty-two, and came to life consequently before March 1474. Now, John Cabot was made a Venetian citizen on March 28, 1476, "in consequence of a constant residence of fifteen years next preceding" in Venice:—"per habitationem annorum XV, juxta consuetudinem." Sebastian Cabot therefore was born in that city; further, that was the general opinion everywhere.

When the great liveries of London objected to Sebastian being put in command of an English expedition, they intimated to the King and to Cardinal Wolsey, on March 1, 1521, that "he was not naturally born within the realm of England." When he treacherously offered his services to the Republic of Venice, his agent represented to the Council of Ten, in September 1522, that Sebastian was "*di questa città nostra*." He himself told Gasparo Contarini, the Venetian ambassador at the court of Charles V., on December 30, 1522, "To tell everything to Your Lordship, I was born in Venice, but brought up in England:—Signor Ambassador, *per dirve il tutto io naqui a Venetia ma sum nutrito in Ingelterra*." Peter Martyr, Navagero, Oviedo, Ramusio, the "Mantua Gentleman," Soranzo, all men of great veracity and high character, who derived their information from his own lips, always call Sebastian Cabot "Venetiano." How can any one presume to set up against this array of positive admissions and logical deductions from authentic documents, the unsupported and solitary statement made to Eden by Sebastian that he was an Englishman by birth, although he represented himself to the envoy of Venice so late as 1551 as a Venetian born?

"Before his arrival in Bristol, John Cabot's reputation as an experienced seaman and navigator had been fully recognized."

This novel piece of information rests upon no evidence whatever.

"The more probable conjecture, as well as an *unbroken local tradition*, points to Cape Bonavista, in Newfoundland, as the first land seen."

The word "conjecture" is too elastic to be of much weight in an inquiry of this character. Nor is it, by far, "the more probable." Biddle, Humboldt and Kohl (the latter with the 1544 map before him) conjectured that Labrador was the landfall. Dr. Dawson conjectures that it is Cape Breton; others conjecture that it must be located in Greenland, and even at Salem Neck. As to the "unbroken local tradition" invoked by Lord Dufferin, Dr. Dawson justly makes the following remark: "A tradition presupposes settlers on the coast to hand it down. But there were no settlers for a hundred years after Cabot; the Indians all perished, and when living, their relations with Europeans were relations of hatred and

aversion. Even their language perished with them." Besides, John Cabot himself says that he did not see a single living soul: "non a visto persona alguna." Who then could have started the alleged "tradition?" But let us not be too skeptical. This "unbroken tradition" may have been transmitted by the ghosts who were often heard conversing:—"muchas vezes oyen hablar spiritus," according to the ninth legend of Cabot's map.

We also notice the following asseveration: "The conception of an intermediate continent [between Europe and Asia] was absent from the mind of Cabot as it was from that of Columbus." His Lordship then says: "In fact, Cabot's notion was that of a north-west passage."

What for? It stands to reason that if the Atlantic Ocean bathed the shores of Asia, there would have been no necessity on the part of Cabot, or any one else, to go in search of a northwestern strait to reach the Asiatic regions.

"In 1526, Sebastian Cabot set out on an important expedition, whose object was the exploration of the Pacific Ocean, but, owing to the dissatisfaction of his subordinates, this intention was frustrated, and Cabot put into La Plata."

The intention was frustrated because Sebastian Cabot, who showed himself a very poor seaman, and apparently had never led a maritime expedition before, went headlong into the "Black pot,"¹ contrarily to the repeated advice of his pilots. In consequence, after a series of professional mishaps, he lost his flagship in the channel of St. Catherine, which shipwreck decided the fate of the enterprise. On his return to Spain, Cabot, for this and other misdemeanors, was arrested and tried by the Council of the Indies, which found him guilty each time in four successive trials, and sentenced him to four years' banishment in a penal colony in Africa.

"His attempts to found a colony did not prove successful, on account of quarrels with the natives, which in some measure owed their origin to an indigenous chief having fallen in love with the wife of one of his officers."

This extraordinary love-story is a fabrication of the whole cloth (not by His Lordship, however). No officer had his wife with him; nay, no woman whatever accompanied or joined Cabot's expedition at any time.

"Sebastian Cabot threw up the enterprise, and returning to England, made his permanent home among us."

Sebastian Cabot returned direct to Spain in July, 1530, where he was forbidden to absent himself from Ocaña, a town of Castile.

¹ See the map in Drapeyron's *Revue de Géographie* for November, 1897.

He did not return to England until eighteen years afterwards, in 1548.

"In 1549 Edward the Sixth gave him the title of Grand Pilot."

Sebastian Cabot never was grand pilot of England. The office did not even exist in the time of Edward the Sixth—Hakluyt to the contrary notwithstanding. It was created about six years after the death of Sebastian Cabot, on January 3, 1563, by Queen Elizabeth, and Stephen Burrough was the first incumbent.

"Before the [second] expedition was ready John Cabot died, leaving the new adventure to be prosecuted by his son . . . Sebastian Cabot started from Bristol in May 1498 with a fleet of five vessels."

There is not a shadow of evidence that John Cabot died before May 1498 and that his son Sebastian sailed then or at any time from Bristol with a fleet. Nay, the name of Sebastian Cabot was not uttered in England in connection with the voyage until March 11, 1521, when the wardens of the great liveries of London expressed the prevailing opinion on the subject in a memorial addressed to the king, to Cardinal Wolsey and to the royal council in these words: "Sebastyan, as we here say, was neuer in that land hymself, all if he maks reporte of many things as he hath hard his father and other men speke in tymes past."¹

As to the alleged death of John Cabot before the second expedition sailed out, it is interesting to note that the redeeming trait in Lord Dufferin's displays of historic lore is his disclosure of a customs roll showing that John Cabot received payment for a tally of £20, either in London or in Bristol, between September 1497 and September 1498. To all appearances this record is no less than the long-sought documentary proof that John Cabot had safely returned to England from his second voyage in the autumn of 1498, and therefore had not died in April or May next, inasmuch as a similar payment has since been found to have been made to John Cabot in 1499.²

VI.

The Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge, believing doubtless that he was pleading *pro domo sua*, has imagined, in connection with the quater-

¹ Every new document which comes to light substantiates the opinion now entertained by impartial historians on the subject. In the *Geografia y Descripcion Universal de las Indias, desde 1571-1574*, of Juan Lopez de Velasco, cosmographer and chronicler of the Indies under Juan de Ovando (Madrid, 1894, p. 170), we read: "Y Sebastian Gabot dicen que la costee hasta 67 grados a costa del rey de Inglaterra, sin haber hecho nada en el descubrimiento:—Sebastian Gabot says that he ranged the coast as far as 67° at the cost of the King of England, [yet] without ever having had anything to do with the discovery."

²AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW for April 1898, pp. 449-455.

centenary, a remarkable theory regarding the origin of the Cabots.¹

According to that ethnological lucubration, all individuals in Europe called Cabot or Chabot, or possessing a name resembling one or the other of these, constitute, so to speak, a separate race of human beings.² It is surprising that the author should have stopped there. To make his demonstration more convincing he ought to have added that as mankind is divided into distinct races, the Caucasian, the Mongolian, the African, the Shemitic, etc., ethnographers should add to the list the race just found out, viz.: the Cabotian, Gabatian or Chabotian *ad libitum*.

This Cabotian or Chabotian species, we are told, "probably came down in the wake of Rolf the Ganger and settled in the island of Jersey." To establish his postulate, the Hon. Cabot Lodge has ingeniously lighted upon an ichthyological argument well calculated to startle ethnographers and historians, viz.:

"*Chabot* is the name of a little fish, and as it is a fish caught in the neighborhood of the islands of Jersey, it was a very natural emblem."

This Chabot, we regret to say, is only *Cottus gobio*,³ a freshwater fish which is extremely common in all the streams of Europe from Italy to Sweden. It may therefore have been also "a very natural emblem" in twenty countries, at least, and not in one exclusively, as is, for instance, the big salamander in Japan.

To make his position stronger, the learned senator advances this other curious piece of ratiocination:

"*Chabot* means also a kind of fish and a measure, and seems to be peculiar in this way to the island of Jersey" (pp. 736-7).

This "peculiarity" is shared with a number of other localities; and were it even otherwise, it would not prove anything. *Chabot* means a certain little fish, but it means also a vine-branch (Sainte-Palaye), particularly in Berry. It has likewise the meaning of a certain kind of toy-top (Godefroy). At Valognes and in Cherbourg *chabot* is the term used to designate half a bushel, just as in Jersey. And as there are in those countries plenty of the small fish called *chabot*, the honorable senator is bound to admit that the Chabotians first came, with or without "Rolf the Ganger," not

¹ *The Home of the Cabots*, in the *Nineteenth Century* for May, 1897.

² "The Cabots were a numerous race. We find them scattered all over Europe; the name varied a little here and there; but it is always easily identified." *Op. cit.*, p. 736.

³ By comparing the plate in Rondelet (Lyon, 1558, fol.) with the arms of the Chabots in Father Anselme's *Histoire Généalogique*, edit. of 1726-33, it is seen that *Cottus gobio*, Lin., is intended. As to the extensive habitat of the fish, see Desmarests in Chenu, and Valenciennes in D'Orbigny.

only to Jersey, but also to all countries where there are or have been human beings called Chabot and at the same time the little fish in question, as well as to all countries in which vine-twigs and toy-tops called *chabots* co-exist with the personal name of Chabot. Another ingenious tenet is the following :

“ The same name and the same arms constitute a proof of identity ” (p. 737).

That is, as the Cabots and Chabots all belong to the same “ race,” they possess or should possess the same arms. This, the Hon. Cabot Lodge has yet to show. Meanwhile, if the Chabots of Poitou bear “ d’or à trois chabots de gueules,” the Chabots of Torrettes in the county of Nice, and those of Sonville in Gâtinais bear “ d’azur à une étoile d’or chargée d’une tour de gueules.” The Chabots of Uzès bear “ d’azur à un chevron d’or posé en pal ;” Michel Cabot of Brittany bore “ d’or à trois têtes de léopards de sable,” with no “ chabots ” whatever in any of them, etc., etc.

Besides, this heraldic theory requires first of all the proof that the seafaring Cabots bore “ d’or à trois chabots de gueules.” Unfortunately, it so happens that neither John nor Sebastian is known to have ever possessed arms of any kind. The distinguished American senator fancies that he can overcome the difficulty by attempting to connect John Cabot and Sebastian Cabot with the French Cabots de la Fare,¹ who, gratuitously, claim to descend from Lewis Cabot. But it has been demonstrated² that this pretension is based entirely upon words of mouth, uttered, so far as documents go, for the first time so recently as 1829.³ What is more, the assumption is based upon a pretended will, which never was produced, which does not exist, and which is represented to have been drawn by a notary of Alais said to be called Pierre Petit, although there never was at Alais or anywhere else a notary of that name.

As to the motto *Semper cor, caput Cabot*, which the Hon. Cabot Lodge sets forth as the device of Cabotians or Chabotians, and as an infallible means of identifying them, the Cabots de la Fare, upon whom he relies exclusively, themselves confess that it was not coined before the middle of the sixteenth century, and not in Jersey, but in Languedoc.

¹ The authority for this statement can only be the *Armorial de la Noblesse de Languedoc*, of Mr. L. de la Roque, which, as regards the Cabots of that province, is based exclusively upon the *ex parte* and uncorroborated assertion contained in the brief cited below.

² *John Cabot the Discoverer of North America*, pp. 382–384 ; a work which the Hon. Senator feigns to ignore.

³ *Cour Royale de Nismes. Plaidoyer pour MM. Cabot de la Fare contre le Cardinal de la Fare*. Nismes, Imprimerie de la Cour Royale, Juillet 1829, p. 31.

The most celebrated and oldest Chabots known are the Chabots of Poitou, where, according to Father Anselme—the highest authority in such matters—they have been known since 1040. The device of the head of the family in the first half of the sixteenth century, the famous Philippe de Chabot, Admiral de Brion, was *Concussus surgo*. Finally, among the Cabots who are the object of the Quatercentenary, the only one who possessed a device was Sebastian, and this device did not read *Semper cor, caput Cabot*, but *Spes in Deo est*.

VII.

To complete the series of Cabotian vagaries it would prove interesting to describe an extraordinary method of solving the cartographical and philological problems involved in the question, and lately exhibited in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada*.¹ But we must forego this recreation, to sum up the facts relating to the Cabots which have been absolutely ascertained, and the drift of opinion concerning the rest.

The outcome is about as follows :

John Cabot was of Genoese origin, and a Venetian merely by adoption. His son Sebastian was not born in Bristol, but in Venice.

The American continent was discovered not in 1494 but in 1497, and it cannot be said with certainty that the date of June 24 is exact.

The discoverer was John Cabot, and not his son Sebastian, who is now believed not to have been even on board. As to the ship's name the "Matthëw," it rests upon a very doubtful authority.

The landfall was neither Bonavista Bay nor Cape Breton Island, so far as evidence goes. Nor was it Cape Chidley, which, however, has not been mentioned otherwise than as the supposed *terminus* of the coasting in 1497.

All we know concerning the second voyage is that in the company of John Cabot's ship, "rigged by the Kynges grace went 3 or 4 moo owte of Bristowe, whereyn dyuers merchauntes as well of London as Bristow aventured goodes and sleight merchaundises, which departed from the West countrey in the begynnyng of Somer 1498." We also know that the fleet had taken supplies for one year, although it was expected back in England in September following, and that it encountered a great storm not far from the coast of Ireland, in consequence of which one of the vessels was disabled and left behind. Finally, we now possess documents tending to show that the previsions of Puebla and Ayala were realized and that John Cabot returned safely to Bristol before September 29, 1498.

¹ Second Series, 1897-1898, Vol. III., pp. cxvi.-cxxxii.

As to the rest, whether found in the *Decades* of Peter Martyr, in the legend of the map of 1544, in Ramusio, or in the 1580 edition of Stow's chronicle and the like, it has no other source, direct or indirect, than what Sebastian chose to relate or invent, and his assertions stand uncorroborated to this day. The contradictions, anachronisms and unquestionable mendacity of the man should deter serious historians from making his statements a basis for their arguments, particularly as to what belongs to the first voyage, or what pertains to the second; considering that Sebastian Cabot never speaks but of one only, mixing perhaps the details of the two expeditions, and without our being able to separate the grain from the chaff, supposing that it is not all chaff.

There is no evidence of any kind that he ever aided the Merchants Adventurers in their struggle with the Steel Yard, the downfall of which proved so beneficial to English manufacture. Nor does he deserve the credit, given to him by certain modern writers, of having initiated the British trade with Russia. That important result was due entirely to the foresight, enterprise and pluck of Richard Chancellor, and was won in spite of the instructions which he and Willoughby had received from Sebastian Cabot.

Sebastian Cabot was an inferior mariner, cosmographer, cartographer and scientist generally, who never discovered the variation or the declination of the compass, as many people believe, or the least thing in magnetics; still less the means of finding the longitude at sea, by divine revelation, as he pretended, or otherwise.

Nor is the astute Italian "the author of the maritime strength of England, who opened the way to those improvements which have rendered the English so great, so eminent, so flourishing a people." The extensive researches instituted for the last fifty years in the numerous naval archives and public records of Great Britain have failed to bring out a single indication, however faint, of his ever having had a hand in the maritime progress of England under the Tudors.

To conclude: So far from the encomiums lavished by modern historians on Sebastian Cabot being true, it is proved beyond cavil and sophistry that he was only an unmitigated charlatan, a mendacious and unfilial boaster, a would-be traitor to Spain, a would-be traitor to England.

"On ne doit aux morts que la vérité."

HENRY HARRISSE.